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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 003567

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ET](#) [ER](#) [IT](#) [UNMEE](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY-ERITREA: MESSAGE ON BORDER ISSUE FALLS ON
DEAF EARS.

Classified By: A/DCM Tom Countryman for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) Fabrizio Pignatelli, MFA East Africa Office Director, briefed PolOff on the recent meeting between Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini and Eritrean Foreign Minister Ali Said Abdella. Pignatelli said that the ministers focused primarily on the peace process between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the implementation of the decision reached by the International Commission on Borders.

2. (C) Pignatelli stated that although Italy is sympathetic to the Eritrean position, FM Frattini stressed the need for Asmara to demonstrate some openness towards the visit of UN Special Envoy Axworthy as a way to promote dialogue and increase confidence in the process. Pignatelli said that this message had been delivered before but that it continues to fall on deaf ears. He expressed frustration, stating that the Eritreans "did not show any understanding for our approach and are not willing to make any concessions." Because of this stubborn attitude, Pignatelli was not optimistic that Axworthy would be welcomed in Asmara nor that the two parties would be prepared to begin a dialogue anytime soon.

3. (C) Regarding the Ethiopians, Pignatelli said that Italy has also called on them to promote greater openness and dialogue but that they have not actively pressed the Ethiopians recently on the International Commission on Borders' decisions. He stated that the Italian approach towards both parties, notwithstanding Italy's support of the Eritrean position, is more or less the same: urging openness and dialogue to keep the process moving forward.

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